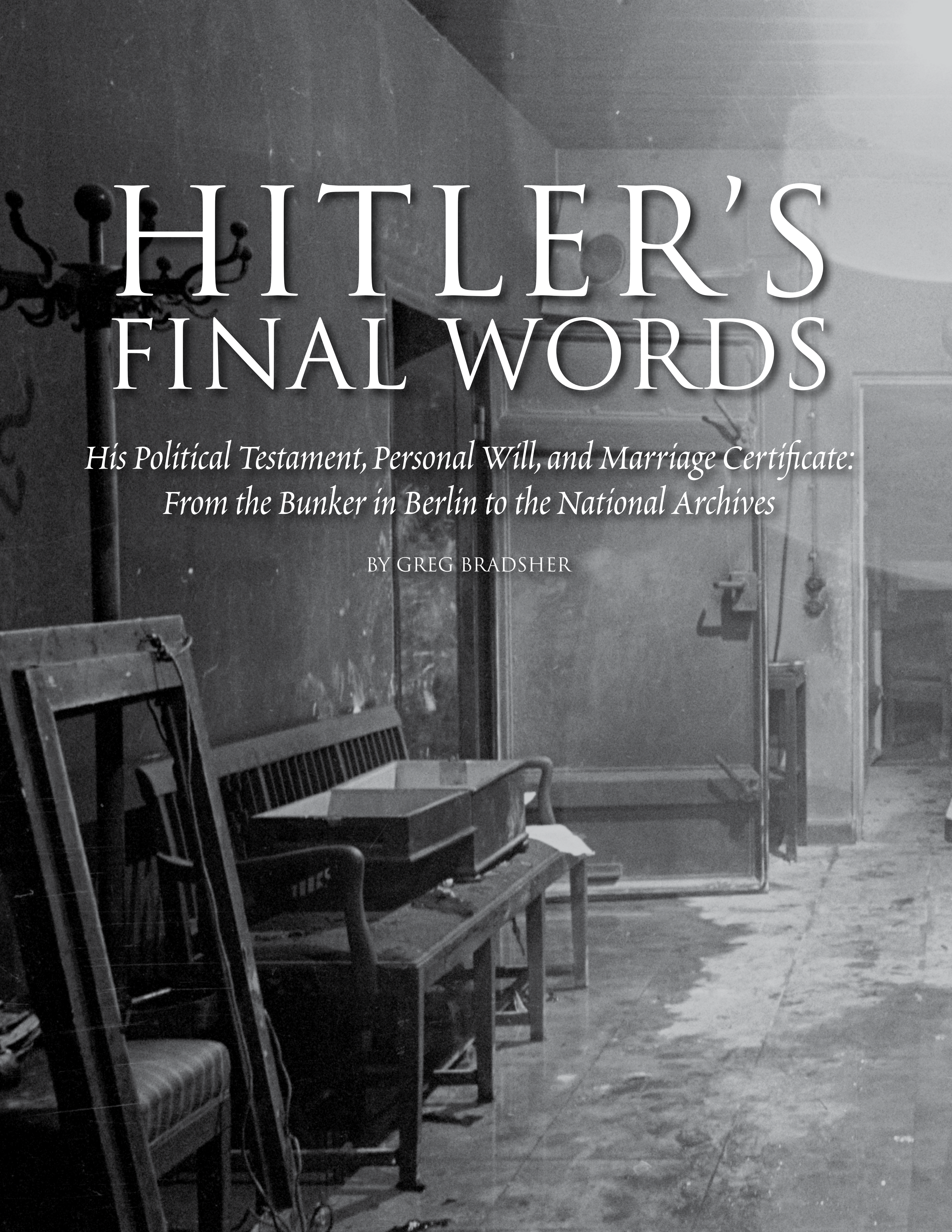


HITLER'S FINAL WORDS

His Political Testament, Personal Will, and Marriage Certificate: From the Bunker in Berlin to the National Archives

BY GREG BRADSHER

The documents featured in the National Archives Exhibit Hall in April 1946 were unlike any displayed there before. They were not pages from America's distant past, pages that Americans make once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimages to Washington to gaze upon, or documents with the signatures of our Founding Fathers.

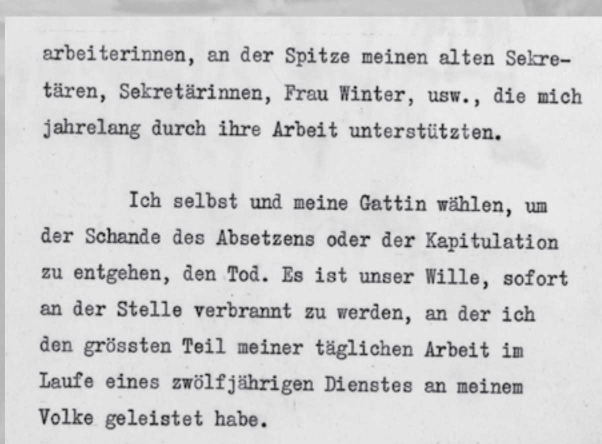
These documents had been created less than a year before and had been in German hands just four months earlier.

Visitors to the Archives beheld the tangible proof of the end of World War II—the military surrender documents—and the last documents signed by Adolf Hitler: his marriage certificate, political testament, and personal will.

The travels of the Hitler documents from deep in the fuehrer's underground bunker in Berlin to the National Archives began in late April 1945, when Russian forces were on the verge of capturing the city.

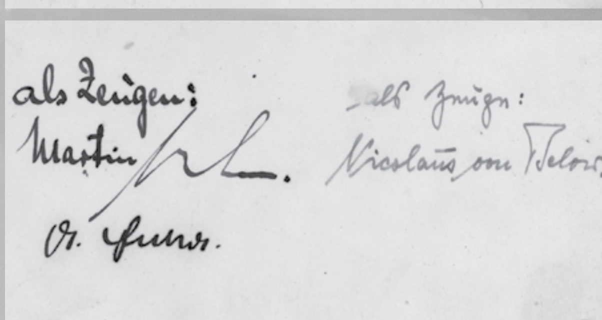
On the evening of April 28, Adolf Hitler, Germany's Reich chancellor and president, had a lot on his mind. News had arrived during the day that there had been an uprising in northern Italy; Benito Mussolini had been arrested by the partisans; armistice negotiations were being initiated by some of Hitler's military commanders in Italy; and there had been an attempted coup in Munich.

Russian forces were only some 1,000 yards from the bunker, and the German Ninth Army, which had been ordered to break through the Russian-encircled capital of the Reich to rescue Hitler would most likely not to be able to accomplish its mission. Still, Hitler held a slim hope that Gen. Walther Wenck's 12th Army, heading toward Potsdam and Berlin, would succeed.



arbeiterinnen, an der Spitze meinen alten Sekretären, Sekretärinnen, Frau Winter, usw., die mich jahrelang durch ihre Arbeit unterstützten.

Ich selbst und meine Gattin wählen, um der Schande des Absetzens oder der Kapitulation zu entgehen, den Tod. Es ist unser Wille, sofort an der Stelle verbrannt zu werden, an der ich den grössten Teil meiner täglichen Arbeit im Laufe eines zwölfjährigen Dienstes an meinem Volke geleistet habe.



als Zeugen:

Nicolaus von Below

Nevertheless, Hitler knew that he soon would have to commit suicide. Before doing so, he wished to marry his long-time mistress, Eva Braun, and write his final political testament and personal will.

As the evening progressed, Hitler received confirmation that Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, was negotiating with the Western Allies. In response, Hitler ordered Eva Braun's brother-in-law, SS-Gruppenfuehrer Hermann Fegelein, Himmler's liaison to Hitler, executed for desertion and treason.

"Come along," he said,
"I want to dictate something."

Hitler's secretary, 25-year-old Gertrude Junge, tried that evening to sleep for an hour. Sometime after 11 p.m., she woke up. She washed, changed her clothes, and thought it must be time to drink tea with Hitler, the other remaining secretary (31-year-old Frau Gerda Christian), and Hitler's vegetarian cook (25-year-old Fraulein Constanze Manzialy), as had become a nightly occurrence. When she opened the door to Hitler's study, Hitler came toward her, shook her hand, and asked, "'Have you had a nice little rest, child?'" Junge replied, "Yes, I have slept a little." He said, "Come along, I want to dictate something." This was between 11:30 p.m. and midnight.

They went into the little conference room near Hitler's quarters. She was about to remove the cover from the typewriter, as Hitler normally dictated directly to the typewriter, when he said, "Take it down on the shorthand pad." She sat down alone at the big table and waited. Hitler stood in his usual place by the broad side of the table, leaned both hands on it, and stared at the empty table top, no longer covered that day with maps.

For several seconds Hitler did not say anything. Then, suddenly he began to speak the first words: "My political testament."

Opposite: Part of the conference area in Hitler's underground bunker. *Left:* Hitler ended his personal will by stating that he and his wife "choose death to escape the disgrace of being forced to resign or surrender." The will is dated April 29, 1945, and witnessed by Bormann, Goebbels, and Von Below.

As Hitler began speaking, she had the impression that he was in a hurry. "In tones of indifference, almost mechanically, the Fuehrer," Junge would later observe, "comes out with the explanations, accusations and demands that I, the German people and the whole world know already."

After finishing his political testament, according to Junge, Hitler paused a brief moment and then began dictating his private will. Hitler's personal will was shorter. It explained his marriage, disposed of his property, and announced his impending death.

The dictation was completed. Hitler had not made any corrections on either document. He moved away from the table on which he had been leaning all this time and said, "Type that out for me at once in triplicate and then bring it in to me." Junge felt that there was something urgent in his voice, and thought about the most important, most crucial document written by Hitler going out into the world without any corrections or thorough revision. She knew that "Every letter of birthday wishes to some Gauleiter, artist, etc., was polished up, improved, revised—but now Hitler had no time for any of that."

Junge took her notepad and typewriter across the hall to type up the political and personal wills. The room she used was next to Reichs Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels's private room. There she began typing up her shorthand notes of the two documents, knowing that Hitler wanted her to finish as fast as possible.

An Early Morning Ceremony With Just a Few Friends

The next item of business was the Hitler-Braun marriage. Once Junge departed the conference room, guests began entering to attend the wedding ceremony. In the meantime, Hitler was in his sitting room with a few people, trying to get the wedding ready in a dignified way, while the conference room was turned into a registry office and set up for the ceremony. SS-Maj. Heinz Linge (Hitler's valet since 1935) began getting things ready for the post-wedding ceremony, including gathering up food and drink for Hitler's inner circle.

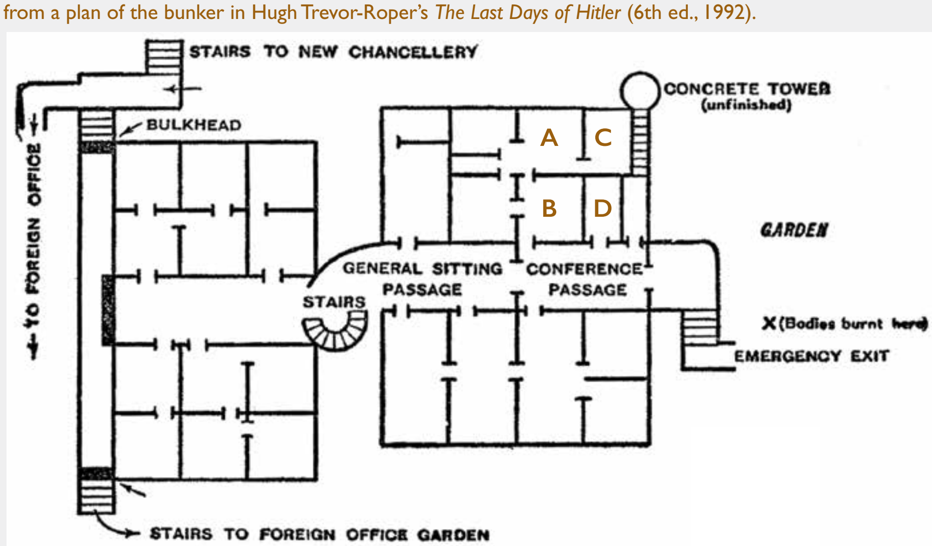
Meanwhile, Goebbels, in his capacity of gauleiter of Berlin, knew of someone authorized to act as a registrar of marriage who was still in Berlin, fighting with the Volkssturm, a last-ditch military organization established by the Nazi Party in October 1944. He was a 50-year-old municipal councilor named Walter Wagner. A group of SS men was dispatched across the city to bring him back. Wagner appeared shortly before 1 a.m. on April 29 in the uniform of the Nazi Party and the armband of the Volkssturm. The ceremony took place probably at some point between 1 a.m. and 2 a.m. Hitler and Braun left their apartment hand in hand and went into the conference room. Hitler's face was ashen, his gaze wandered restlessly. Eva Braun was also pale from sleepless nights. Goebbels and Martin Bormann, the head of the Nazi Party chancellery and private secretary to Hitler, were waiting for them in the antechamber.

In the conference room, Hitler and Eva greeted the functionary who had taken up his position at the table. Then they sat down in the first two chairs, and Bormann and Goebbels went to their assigned places. The door was closed. The two parties declared that they were of pure Aryan descent and were free from hereditary disease. In a few minutes the parties had given assent, the register had been signed, and the ceremony was over. When the bride came to sign her name on the marriage certificate, she began to write "Eva Braun" but quickly struck out the initial letter B and corrected it to "Eva Hitler, nee Braun." Bormann, Goebbels, and Wagner also signed the register as witnesses. The ceremony lasted no longer than 10 minutes.

Bormann opened the door again when Hitler and Eva were signing the license. Hitler then kissed Eva's hand. They went into the conference passage, where they shook hands with those waiting. They then withdrew into their private apartments for a wedding breakfast. Shortly afterward, Bormann, Goebbels, Magda Goebbels, and the secretaries Christian and Junge were invited into the private suite.



Left: Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun, ca. 1942. *Right:* A plan of Hitler's underground bunker near the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, Germany, shows Hitler's study (A), anteroom (B), bedroom (C), and "map room" (D). Adapted from a plan of the bunker in Hugh Trevor-Roper's *The Last Days of Hitler* (6th ed., 1992).



Junge would not come right away as she was typing across the hall. At some point during the party, Junge walked across the corridor to express her congratulations to the newlyweds and wish them luck. She stayed for less than 15 minutes and then returned to her typing.

For part of the time, General of Infantry Hans Krebs, Lt. Gen. Wilhelm Burgdorf, and Lt. Col. Nicholaus von Below (Hitler's Luftwaffe adjutant) joined the party, as did Werner Naumann (state secretary in the Ministry of Propaganda), Arthur Axmann (Reich youth leader), Ambassador Walter Hewel (permanent representative of Foreign Ministry to Hitler at Fuehrer headquarters), Hitler's valet Linge, SS-Maj. Otto Guensche (personal adjutant to Hitler), and Manzialy, the cook. They sat for hours, drinking champagne and tea, eating sandwiches, and talking. Hitler spoke again of his plans of suicide and expressed his belief that National Socialism was finished and would never revive (or would not be resurrected soon), and that death would be a relief to him now that he had been deceived and betrayed by his best friends.

The Party Goes On As the Russians Near

Hitler left the party three times to ask how Junge had gotten in her typing. According to Junge, Hitler would look in and say "Are you ready?" and she said, "No my Fuehrer, I am not ready yet." Bormann and Goebbels also kept coming to see if she was finished. These comings and goings made Junge nervous and delayed the process, increasing her distress about the whole situation, and she made several typographical errors. Those were later crossed out in ink.

Also complicating her task was the need to add to the political testament the names of some appointments of the new government under Adm. Karl Doenitz. During the course of the wedding party, Hitler discussed and negotiated the matter with Bormann and Goebbels. While Junge was typing the clean copies of the political testament from her shorthand notes, Goebbels or Bormann came in alternately to give her the names of the ministers of the future government, a process that lasted until she had finished typing.

Toward 5 a.m., Junge typed the last of the three copies each of the political testament and personal will. They were timed at 4 a.m., as that was when she had begun typing the first copy of the political testament. Just as she finished, Goebbels came to her for the documents, almost tearing the last piece of paper from the typewriter. She gave them to him without having a chance to review the final product. She asked Goebbels whether they still wanted her, and he said, "no, lie down and have a rest." The wedding party was ending, and Goebbels took the copies of the documents to Hitler.

The documents were ready to be signed. First Hitler signed the personal will, followed by the witnesses Bormann, Goebbels, and von Below. Hitler and witnesses Goebbels, Bormann, Burgdorf, and Krebs then signed the political testament.

At around 6 a.m. on April 29, Russian artillery began its regular intense bombardment of the government district and the area around the Reich Chancellery. The front line was now only about 450 yards from the chancellery.

During those early morning hours, Hitler planned for the three copies of his personal testament and personal will to be taken out of Berlin and delivered to Admiral Doenitz and Field Marshal Ferdinand Schoerner, commander of the Army Group Center in Bohemia (and, by way of Hitler's political testament, newly appointed commander-in-chief of the army).

Three couriers set out from Berlin to cross enemy lines, each carrying a copy of the political testament and personal will. Maj. Willy Johannmeier was Hitler's army adjutant; SS Col. Wilhelm Zander, an aide representing Bormann; and Heinz Lorenz, an official of the Propaganda Ministry representing Goebbels. Johannmeier was sent to Schoerner; Zander to Doenitz, carrying the marriage certificate as well as the testament and will. Bormann's cover letter to Doenitz stated: "Dear Grand Admiral, Since all divisions have failed to arrive, and our position seems hopeless, the Fuehrer dictated last night the attached political Testament. *Heil Hitler*.—Yours, Bormann."

Lorenz received his package from Goebbels, but it is unclear where Goebbels told him to take the documents. It seems that he was to take them to Doenitz if possible, or to the nearest German High Command. If all else failed, he was to publish the wills for historical purposes and ultimately store them at the party archives in Munich.

Hitler told Johannmeier that this testament must be brought out of Berlin at any price, that Schoerner must receive it, and that he believed Johannmeier would succeed in the task. Hitler spoke very cordially and shook his hand. They both realized that they would not see each other again.

Hitler Commits Suicide; Allies Capture Documents

The Russian attack drew relentlessly near the bunker. At about 9 a.m., the artillery fire suddenly stopped, and runners reported to the bunker that the Russians were advancing with tanks and infantry. It grew silent in the bunker, and there was great tension among its occupants.

Later on that morning Junge went back to Hitler's bunker. She noted that Hitler was uneasy and walked from one room to another. Hitler told her he would wait until the couriers had arrived at their destinations with the testaments and then would commit suicide.

At noon, with the Russians closing in on the bunker, Hitler held a situation conference with Bormann, Krebs, Burgdorf, Goebbels, and a few others. At the same time, the three couriers joined by Cpl. Heinz Hummerich (a clerk in the adjutancy of the fuehrer headquarters), left the bunker and headed west.

The following afternoon, Hitler and Eva Braun committed suicide in the bunker in Berlin. On May 1 at 2:46 p.m., Goebbels

sent Doenitz a message that Hitler had died at 3:30 p.m. on April 30, and that his testament of April 29:

> appoints you as Reich President, Reich Minister Dr. Goebbels as Reich Chancellor, Reichsleiter Bormann as Party Minister, Reich Minister Seyss-Inquart as Foreign Minister. By order of the Fuehrer, the Testament has been sent out of Berlin to you, to Field-Marshal Schoerner, and for preservation and publication. Reichsleiter Bormann intends to go to you today and to inform you of the situation. Time and form of announcement to the Press and to the troops is left to you. Confirm receipt.—Goebbels.

Six hours later, Goebbels killed himself.

At 10:26 p.m. May 1, Doenitz, over Hamburg Radio, announced Hitler's death and his own succession.

As Berlin surrendered, the three couriers made their way to Potsdam and Brandenburg. On May 11 they crossed the Elbe at Parey, between Magdeburg and Genthin, and under the guise of foreign workers, passed into the area of the Western Allies, transported by American trucks. By this time the war was over, and Zander and Lorenz lost heart and easily convinced themselves that their mission now had no purpose or possibility of fulfillment. Johannmeier allowed himself to be influenced by them, although he still believed he would have been able to complete his mission.

After abandoning their mission, the men split up. Zander and Lorenz went to the house of Zander's relatives in Hanover. From there, Zander proceeded south until he reached Munich, where he stayed with his wife, and then continued to Tegernsee. At Tegernsee, Zander hid his documents in a trunk. He changed his name, identity, status, and began a new life under the name of Friedrich Wilhelm Paustin. Johannmeier meanwhile went to his family's home in Iserlohn in Westphalia, and buried his documents in a bottle in the back garden. Lorenz ended up in Luxembourg and found work as a journalist under an assumed name.

Lorenz and the documents he was carrying were seized by the British Army, in the British Zone of Occupation of Germany, in November 1945. The Americans captured Zander and his documents (including the original marriage license of Hitler and Braun, and the handwritten transmittal letter from Bormann to Doenitz) with the assistance of British intelligence officer Maj. Hugh Trevor-Roper, in Bavaria on December 28.

After Zander's arrest, interest switched to Johannmeier, who had been living quietly with his parents in Iserlohn, in the British Zone of Occupation. Trevor-Roper had him detained and interrogated on December 20. Johannmeier maintained that he had no documents but had just escorted Zander and Lorenz out of Berlin. Trevor-Roper met with Johannmeier on January 1, 1946, and explained to him that Zander and Lorenz were both in Allied hands and that in view of their independent but unanimous testimony, it was impossible to accept his statement that he had been merely an escort. He nevertheless maintained his story. He agreed that the evidence was against him but insisted that his story was true.

Asked if he could name any witness whose testimony might offset that of Zander and Lorenz, he stated that he had spoken to no one about his mission, and that the only man who knew the details was the man who had given it to him—Lt. Gen. Wilhelm Burgdorf. When told that Burgdorf was missing and believed dead, Johannmeier exclaimed, "Then my last hope is gone."

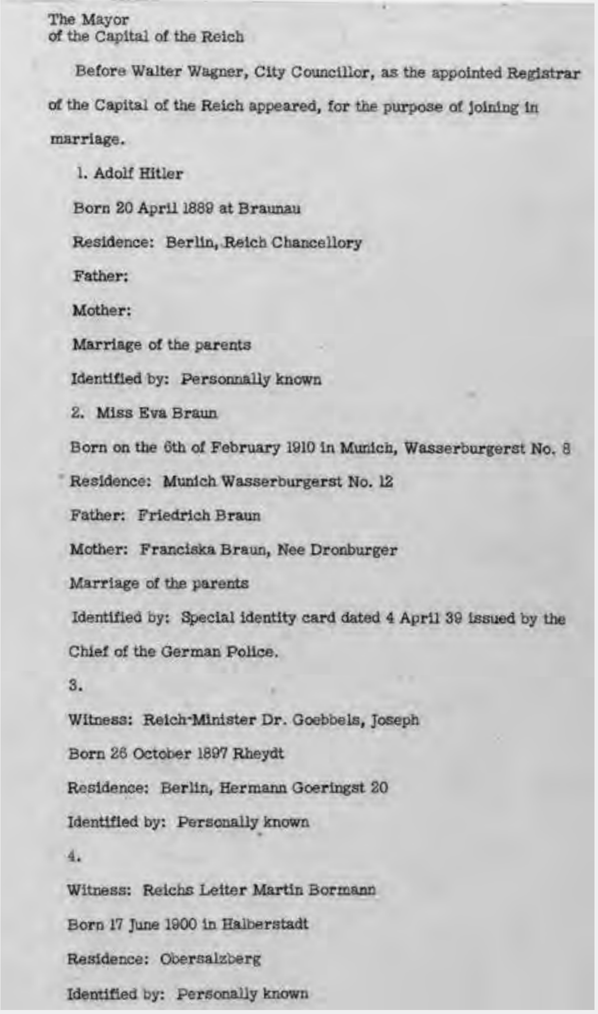
The position was put sympathetically to Johannmeier: that he must realize that the documents were already in Allied hands, and another revelation could add nothing to their knowledge, and continued resistance to the evidence would entail his imprisonment. But still Johannmeier insisted that his story was the truth. He agreed to sign a written declaration to that effect. "If I had the documents, it would be senseless to withhold them now, but what I have not I cannot deliver. I cannot even prove that I have not got them?" His otherwise unaccountable persistence in this story, by which he was condemning himself to imprisonment for no conceivable advantage to anyone, and by the ingenuousness of his protestations, Johannmeier had almost persuaded Trevor-Roper that there must after all be some flaw in the evidence against him, some element of truth in his improbable but unshakeable story.

They were alone in the headquarters; everyone else had left for the holiday. Trevor-Roper had nowhere to put Johannmeier. He decided that he must admit failure and summon a truck to take him away. But when he left the room for two hours for a long-distance phone call, Johannmeier had leisure to think.

When Trevor-Roper returned and began the mechanical questioning again, he became aware of a change in Johannmeier's attitude. Johannmeier, according to Trevor-Roper, seemed to have already resolved his mental doubts, and after a little preliminary and precautionary fencing, in which he sought assurance that he would not be penalized if he revealed his secret about the documents, he declared, "I have the papers." He stated that he had buried them in a garden of his home in Iserlohn, in a glass bottle, and he agreed to lead Trevor-Roper to the spot.

Allies Debate Fate Of Hitler's Papers

On the long drive back to Iserlohn, Johannmeier spoke freely on various topics. When they stopped for a meal, Trevor-Roper asked him why he had decided to reveal the truth. Johannmeier said he had reflected that if Zander and Lorenz had so easily consented to betray the trust reposed in them, it would be quixotic for him, who was not a member of the party or connected with politics but merely carrying the documents in obedience to a military order, to endure further hardship to no practical purpose.


The Mayor
of the Capital of the Reich

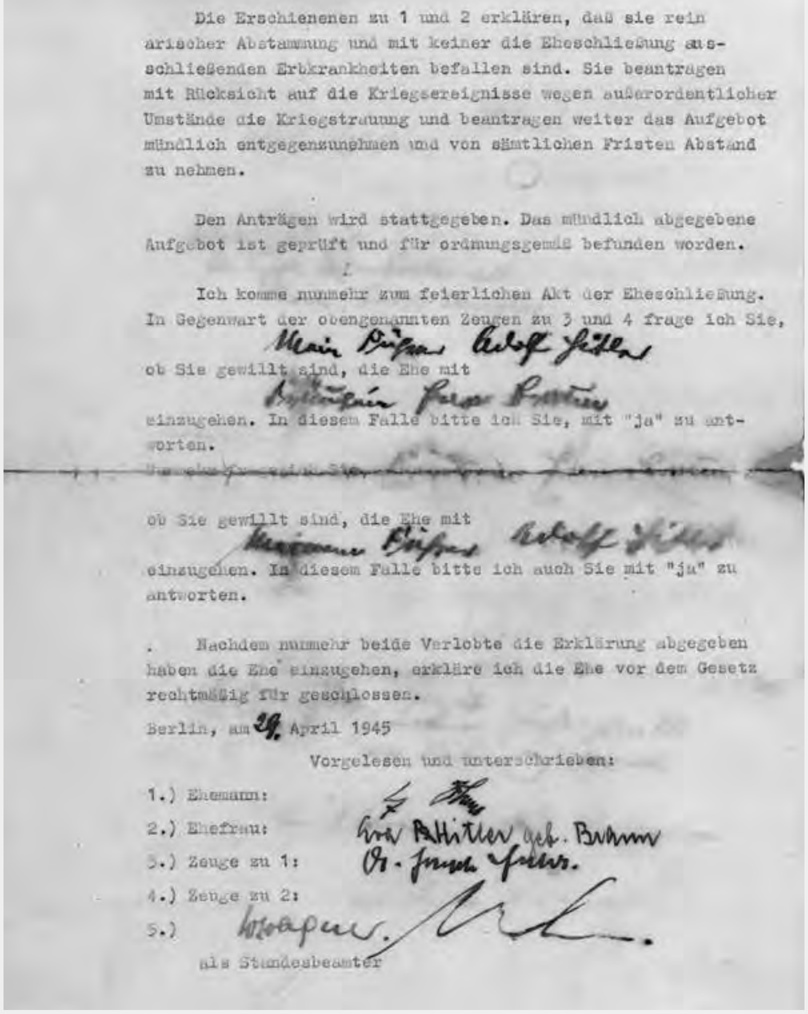
Before Walter Wagner, City Councillor, as the appointed Registrar of the Capital of the Reich appeared, for the purpose of joining in marriage.

1. Adolf Hitler
Born 20 April 1889 at Braunau
Residence: Berlin, Reich Chancellory
Father:
Mother:
Marriage of the parents
Identified by: Personnally known

2. Miss Eva Braun
Born on the 6th of February 1910 in Munich, Wasserburgerst No. 8
Residence: Munich Wasserburgerst No. 12
Father: Friedrich Braun
Mother: Franciska Braun, Nee Dronburger
Marriage of the parents
Identified by: Special identity card dated 4 April 39 issued by the Chief of the German Police.

3.
Witness: Reich-Minister Dr. Goebbels, Joseph
Born 26 October 1897 Rheydt
Residence: Berlin, Hermann Goeringst 20
Identified by: Personally known

4.
Witness: Reichs Leiter Martin Bormann
Born 17 June 1900 in Halberstadt
Residence: Obersalzberg
Identified by: Personally known


Die Erschienenen zu 1 und 2 erklären, daß sie rein arischer Abstammung und mit keiner die Eheschließung ausschließenden Erbkrankheiten befallen sind. Sie beantragen mit Rücksicht auf die Kriegsereignisse wegen außerordentlicher Umstände die Kriegstrauung und beantragen weiter das Aufgebot mündlich entgegenzunehmen und von sämtlichen Fristen Abstand zu nehmen.

Den Anträgen wird stattgegeben. Das mündlich abgegebene Aufgebot ist geprüft und für ordnungsgemäß befunden worden.

Ich komme nunmehr zum feierlichen Akt der Eheschließung. In Gegenwart der obengenannten Zeugen zu 3 und 4 frage ich Sie, ob Sie gewillt sind, die Ehe mit einzugehen. In diesem Falle bitte ich Sie, mit "ja" zu antworten.

ob Sie gewillt sind, die Ehe mit einzugehen. In diesem Falle bitte ich auch Sie mit "ja" zu antworten.

Nachdem nunmehr beide Verlobte die Erklärung abgegeben haben die Ehe einzugehen, erkläre ich die Ehe vor dem Gesetz rechtmäßig für geschlossen.

Berlin, am 29. April 1945

Vorgelesen und unterschrieben:

1.) Ehemann:
2.) Ehefrau: Eva Hitler geb. Braun
3.) Zeuge zu 1:
4.) Zeuge zu 2:
5.) Wagner
als Standesbeamter

Left: The identification page from the marriage certificate for Hitler and Eva Braun (English translation) quickly completed in the bunker the day before their suicide as Russian forces closed in. *Right:* The marriage certificate's signature page bears the signatures of Hitler, Braun, Goebbels, and Bormann.

In Iserlohn they left the car some distance away at Johannmeier's request—he did not want the neighbors to see a British staff car outside his parents' home. It was now night and the ground had frozen hard. Together they walked out to the back corner of his garden. Johannmeier found the place, broke frozen surface of the ground with an axe, and dug up the glass bottle. Then he smashed the bottle, drew out the documents, and handed them over to Trevor-Roper. They were the third copy of Hitler's private will and personal testament plus a cover letter from Burgdorf to Schoerner.

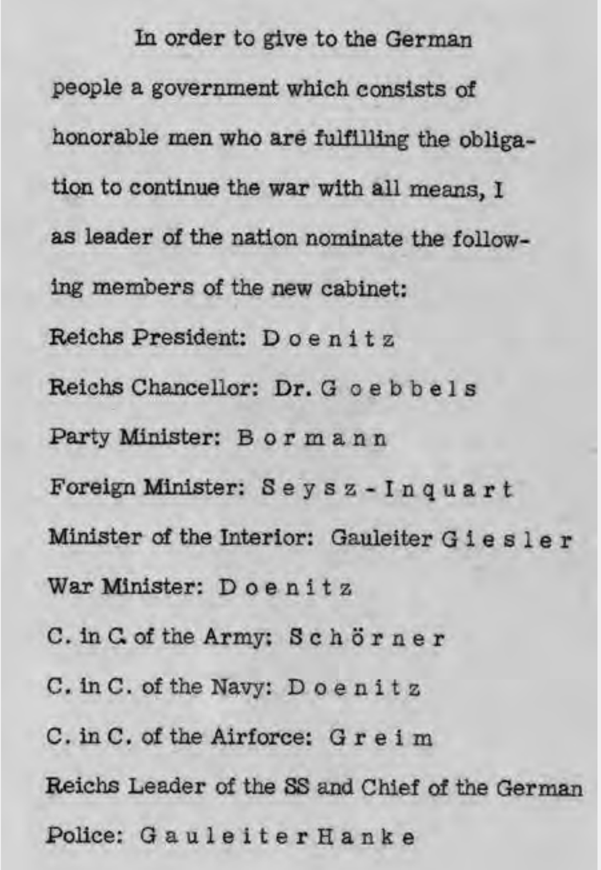
The Allies now had the three sets of documents that had been carried out of the bunker in April.

Early in the new year, Foreign Service Officer J. D. Beam wrote Ambassador Robert Murphy, U.S. political adviser for Germany, that Col. S. Frederick Gronich (the officer in charge of the Documents Control Center at Frankfurt) had brought to him that day (January 2, 1946), copies of Hitler's will and marriage license.

Beam observed that they were highly interesting documents and seemed altogether authentic. He indicated that G-2 was sending the original documents to Washington, where they might be deposited with the Library of Congress. This action was being taken, he noted, to forestall any demands from other countries for custody of the documents. Beam reported that photostatic copies had been made and that Murphy's office was to be furnished with two.

On January 3, 1946, Brig. Gen. Edwin L. Sibert, G-2, U.S. Forces European Theater (USFET) telephoned Lt. Col. Harold H. May, intelligence chief of G-2, Third U.S. Army, to ask if they had published the recently discovered Hitler documents. May answered that they had put out only a general release about the papers. Sibert said that the British had been making statements to the effect that they would soon publish them and wondered what had happened to the original translations of these documents. May informed him that they were at the Executive Branch, G-2, Third Army. Sibert requested that G-2 keep the contents secret.

In a January 4 cable to the State Department, Murphy reported the circumstances of the capture of the will and other documents as related to his office by G-2 USFET. Murphy added that Zander was last reported to be in custody in Munich and that G-2 accepted the authenticity of the documents. He indicated that with his concurrence, the original documents were being forwarded shortly to the War Department for possible later custody by the Library of Congress and that it was understood that photostatic copies would be


In order to give to the German people a government which consists of honorable men who are fulfilling the obligation to continue the war with all means, I as leader of the nation nominate the following members of the new cabinet:

Reichs President: D o e n i t z

Reichs Chancellor: Dr. G o e b b e l s

Party Minister: B o r m a n n

Foreign Minister: S e y s z - I n q u a r t

Minister of the Interior: Gauleiter G i e s l e r

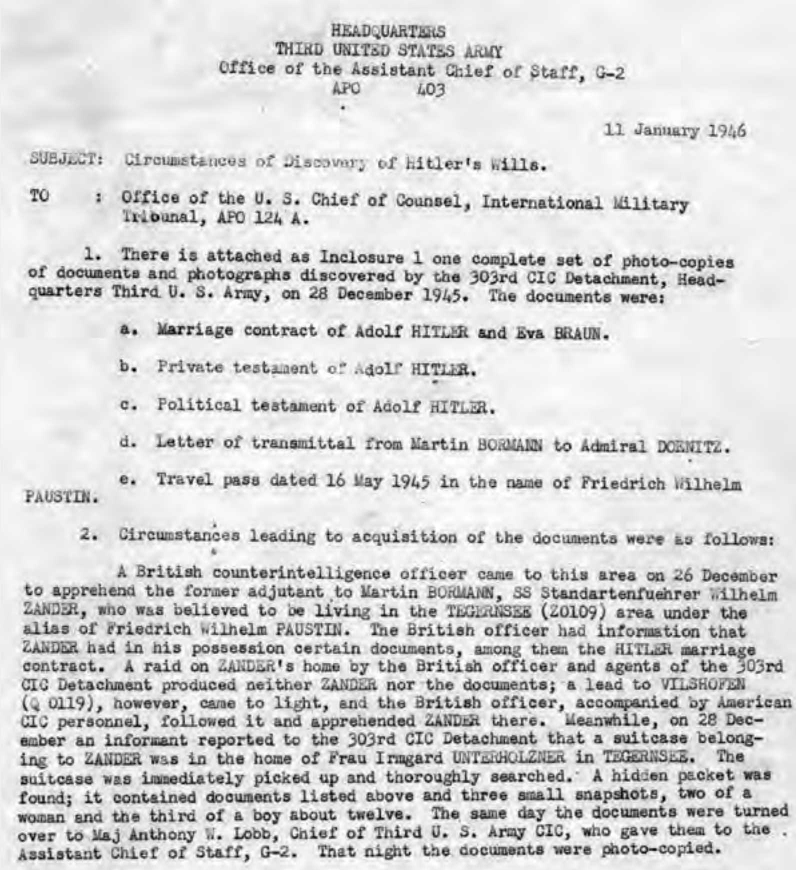
War Minister: D o e n i t z

C. in C. of the Army: S c h ö r n e r

C. in C. of the Navy: D o e n i t z

C. in C. of the Airforce: G r e i m

Reichs Leader of the SS and Chief of the German Police: G a u l e i t e r H a n k e


HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY
Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2
APO 403

11 January 1946

SUBJECT: Circumstances of Discovery of Hitler's Wills.

TO : Office of the U. S. Chief of Counsel, International Military Tribunal, APO 124 A.

1. There is attached as Inclosure 1 one complete set of photo-copies of documents and photographs discovered by the 303rd CIC Detachment, Headquarters Third U. S. Army, on 28 December 1945. The documents were:

a. Marriage contract of Adolf HITLER and Eva BRAUN.

b. Private testament of Adolf HITLER.

c. Political testament of Adolf HITLER.

d. Letter of transmittal from Martin BORMANN to Admiral DOENITZ.

e. Travel pass dated 16 May 1945 in the name of Friedrich Wilhelm PAUSTIN.

2. Circumstances leading to acquisition of the documents were as follows:

A British counterintelligence officer came to this area on 26 December to apprehend the former adjutant to Martin BORMANN, SS Standartenfuehrer Wilhelm ZANDER, who was believed to be living in the TEGERNSEE (Z0109) area under the alias of Friedrich Wilhelm PAUSTIN. The British officer had information that ZANDER had in his possession certain documents, among them the HITLER marriage contract. A raid on ZANDER's home by the British officer and agents of the 303rd CIC Detachment produced neither ZANDER nor the documents; a lead to VILSHOFEN (Q 0119), however, came to light, and the British officer, accompanied by American CIC personnel, followed it and apprehended ZANDER there. Meanwhile, on 28 December an informant reported to the 303rd CIC Detachment that a suitcase belonging to ZANDER was in the home of Frau Irmgard UNTERHOLZNER in TEGERNSEE. The suitcase was immediately picked up and thoroughly searched. A hidden packet was found; it contained documents listed above and three small snapshots, two of a woman and the third of a boy about twelve. The same day the documents were turned over to Maj Anthony W. Lobb, Chief of Third U. S. Army CIC, who gave them to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2. That night the documents were photo-copied.

Left: Hitler composed his political testament in his last hours (English translation shown) with a transfer of power to those officers he still trusted. He designated Doenitz as Reichs President, Goebbels as Reichs Chancellor, and Bormann as Party Minister. *Right:* A January 11, 1946, letter from G2, Third U.S. Army, to the U.S. Chief of Counsel, International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg transmitted photocopies of the Hitler documents and a summary of how British and American officers recovered them from Wilhelm Zander, an adjutant to Martin Bormann.

given to other interested Allied nations and that he was to receive a copy, which he would send to the State Department.

Four days later, Beam sent a dispatch to the State Department that included a copy of a report received by G-2 USFET regarding the discovery of Hitler's political testament and other documents found with Zander. Beam reported that the original documents were on their way to the War Department. He added that there were probably three signed originals of Hitler's wills, including the one found in Bavaria with Zander. The British discovered the other two copies. The dispatch enclosed translations and photostats of letters of transmittal, the marriage license, the private will, and the personal testament. Beam surmised that the documents captured by the United States authorities in Bavaria contained the single original of Hitler's marriage certificate.

Another letter tracking the whereabouts of the Hitler's documents was sent on January 11 from G-2, Third U.S. Army, to the Office of the U.S. Chief of Counsel, International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. This dispatch included a complete set of photocopies of documents and photographs discovered by the 303rd Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) Detachment, Third U.S. Army, on December 28, 1945.

British Oppose Publicity; The Americans Agree

The British also had their concerns about the Hitler documents. The British embassy in Washington on January 9, 1946, prepared an aide memoire for the State Department stating that while the complete texts of Hitler's political and personal testaments had been published in the press, the less public notice the documents received in Germany or elsewhere the better.

Further, the British government intended to avoid any mention of the documents in its propaganda to Germany or Austria. The embassy then raised the question of the disposal of the original documents, two sets of which were in British hands and one set in American hands:

> It is possible that these might in time become objects of great sentimental and political value to many Germanys. [Ernest Bevin, the principal secretary of state for foreign affairs] is considering whether it would not be wise to destroy these sets. This could be done at any time but meanwhile he intends that the British sets should be removed from Germany and safely interred in the British official archives. . . . Mr. Bevin hopes that the State Department will take similar steps and will also agree that the number of microfilm copies should be very strictly limited as well. Even facsimiles might become objects of veneration and these could be multiplied in Germany if a single facsimile copy got into the wrong hands.

Within a short time of receiving the aide memoire, Dean Acheson, the acting secretary of state, informed Ambassador Murphy of the British government's intended plans for the Hitler documents. While the State Department, Acheson wrote, was not impressed by the British argument in view of publication of texts, he asked Murphy whether photostatic copies mentioned in his January 4 cable had actually been given to other interested Allied nations and whether the original set had been forwarded to the War Department.

On January 22 Beam wrote Col. W. D. Hohenthal, chief of the intelligence branch, Office of the Director of Political Affairs, Office of Military Government (U.S.) that Hitler's political and personal testaments in U.S. hands had been dispatched to the War Department, that copies had been furnished to the British and French, and that arrangements were made to provide photostats to news representatives.

On January 24 Murphy wrote the secretary of state, passing on information in Beam's report regarding the Hitler documents. Murphy reported that the U.S. Army recovery included the only originals of Hitler's marriage certificate and Bormann's letter of transmittal to Doenitz, indicating that this set was the one intended for despatch to Doenitz by special courier. The British find, he added, included a memorandum by Goebbels and a letter from a German general in Berlin. He reported that photostatic copies of the above documents were being exchanged with the British to complete respective sets and that G-2 had not yet received an interrogation report on Zander.

With the above information, the State Department crafted a memorandum acknowledging receipt of the British embassy's aide memoire regarding the disposition of the original texts and microfilm copies of Hitler's political and personal testaments. The memorandum indicated that the State Department agreed with the British Foreign Office "that the less public notice the documents receive in Germany or outside the better" and that it had no present intention of mentioning these documents in broadcasts to or in press releases for Germany. The State Department indicated that it had been informed that the original signed texts of the documents that were in U.S. hands had been transmitted to the War Department and that Murphy reported that the U.S. military authorities arranged to furnish copies of these documents to the British, Russian, and French military officials, and also to give photostatic copies to representatives of the American press. Concluding, the memorandum stated that:

> The Department recognizes that it would be undesirable to have facsimiles of these documents distributed throughout Germany. It should be possible to prevent such distribution during the period of Allied control over publications, publishing establishments and printing presses in Germany, in view of the release of photostatic copies that has already taken place, the Department does not see what steps could be taken at this time to prevent facsimiles from falling into German hands at some future date.

In a January 25 communication, the chief of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) sent photostatic copies of Hitler's marriage certificate, personal will, political testament and allied papers to Maj. Gen. Clayton Bissell, the assistant chief of staff, G-2. Bissell was informed that MIS had possession of the original documents, which had been evacuated from Germany. MIS recommended that he authorize putting both the original documents and translations in a protective folder suitable for presentation, forward all the materials to the chief of staff for presentation to the President, and recommend that the President permit the documents to be placed in a public display in the Library of Congress. Bissel should also have photostatic copies of the documents passed on to the State Department for presentation to the Allied governments of Russia, France, and Great Britain. Bissell approved the plan and recommended that the transmittal to foreign governments be done on the secretary of war to secretary of state level.

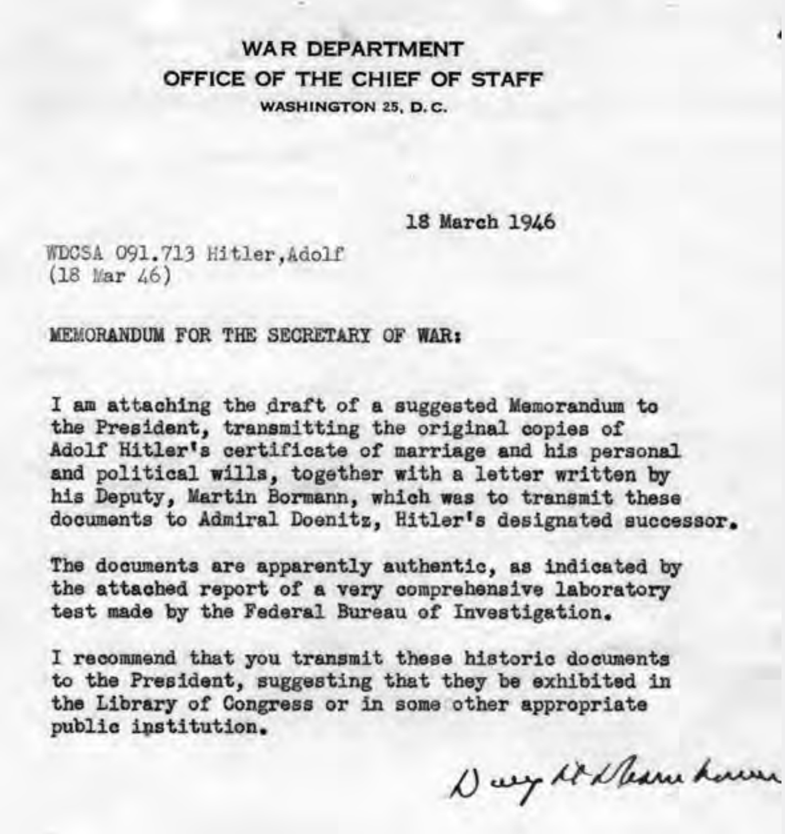
Gen. Eisenhower Asks FBI To Authenticate Documents

Another month passed before MIS acted. In accordance with instructions, a letter from the chief of staff to the President had been drafted for transmittal of Hitler's personal documents. The State Department had been contacted to determine how many photostatic copies of the documents were required for their purposes and for forwarding to Allied governments. MIS indicated that their office retained negative photostats of the documents and recommended that an attached summary sheet to the chief of staff be signed and dispatched.

MIS sent G-2 the originals of Hitler's certificate of marriage, will, and testament, together with Bormann's letter of transmittal to Doenitz, mounted in a protective binder together with translations of the documents. Later that day, according to a pencil notation on the retained copy, the documents were hand-carried to the Office of the Chief of Staff.

To learn more about

- The full text of Hitler's marriage certificate, private will, and political testament, go to *http://research.archives.gov/description/6883511.*
- Art that had been looted by the Nazis and what happened after the war, go to *www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2002/summer/nazi-looted-art-1.html* and *www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2013/summer/monuments-men.pdf.*
- The Nazi persecution of the Jews, go to *www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2010/winter/nuremberg.html.*



WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

18 March 1946

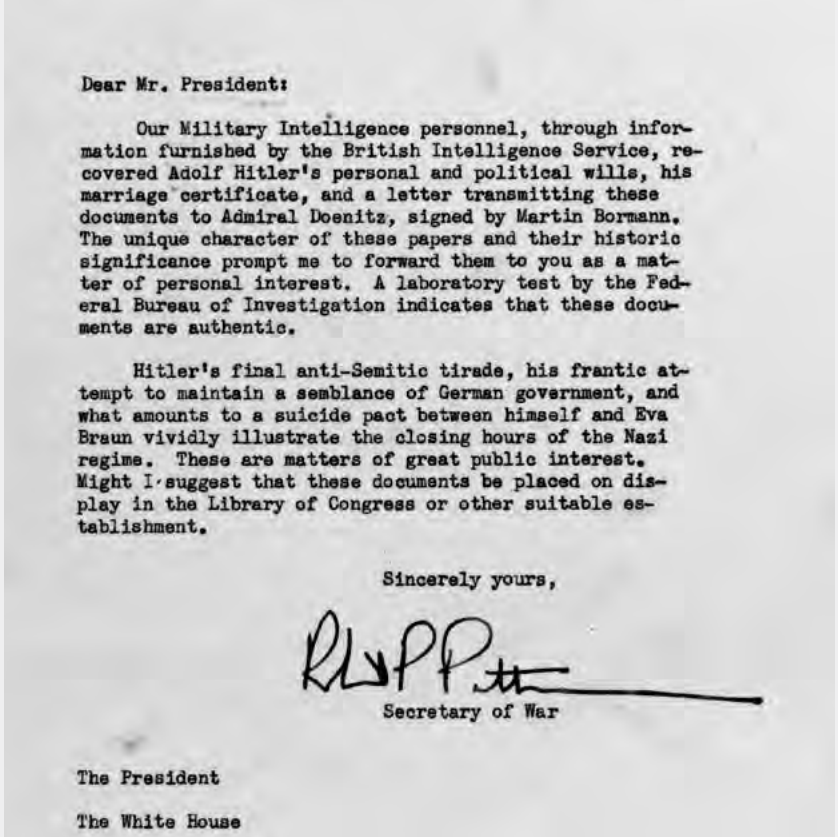
WDCSA 091.713 Hitler,Adolf
(18 Mar 46)

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

I am attaching the draft of a suggested Memorandum to the President, transmitting the original copies of Adolf Hitler's certificate of marriage and his personal and political wills, together with a letter written by his Deputy, Martin Bormann, which was to transmit these documents to Admiral Doenitz, Hitler's designated successor.

The documents are apparently authentic, as indicated by the attached report of a very comprehensive laboratory test made by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

I recommend that you transmit these historic documents to the President, suggesting that they be exhibited in the Library of Congress or in some other appropriate public institution.



Dear Mr. President:

Our Military Intelligence personnel, through information furnished by the British Intelligence Service, recovered Adolf Hitler's personal and political wills, his marriage certificate, and a letter transmitting these documents to Admiral Doenitz, signed by Martin Bormann. The unique character of these papers and their historic significance prompt me to forward them to you as a matter of personal interest. A laboratory test by the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicates that these documents are authentic.

Hitler's final anti-Semitic tirade, his frantic attempt to maintain a semblance of German government, and what amounts to a suicide pact between himself and Eva Braun vividly illustrate the closing hours of the Nazi regime. These are matters of great public interest. Might I suggest that these documents be placed on display in the Library of Congress or other suitable establishment.

Sincerely yours,

Secretary of War

The President

The White House

Left: With FBI certification of the authenticity of the Hitler documents, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower transmitted the original copies to the Secretary of War suggesting that he advise the President to display them at the Library of Congress or "in some other appropriate public institution." *Right:* After General Eisenhower's recommendation, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson wrote the President that the documents "vividly illustrate the closing hours of the Nazi regime" and thus merited public display.

Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower decided that before sending the Hitler documents to the President, they should be authenticated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). MIS sent the FBI the documents bound in a book titled "Adolf Hitler Certificate of Marriage, Private Will and Political Testament." The original document appeared on the left page, and the English translation appeared on the right.

MIS cautioned the FBI to keep secret the fact that the Army had what appeared to be Hitler's marriage certificate, private will, and public testament until the President made it known publicly. The memorandum accompanying the book noted that the original documents could be removed by releasing certain sections of Scotch tape, which held the documents in place. At the bottom of the memorandum was J. Edgar Hoover's blue-inked "OK. H."

The FBI laboratory transmitted its report to the bureau hierarchy on March 13. The report stated that several pages had been removed in order to conduct the examination. Since removal could possibly endanger the specimens, they extracted only pages 1 and 2 of the marriage certificate (the most questionable) and the last (signature) pages of the private will and the political testament. One or two of the covers of other pages were lifted to gain access to the paper, but otherwise the mounts were not disturbed. The laboratory reported that rubber cement had been used at the top and corners to fasten the original papers to the cardboard. In replacing the removed sheets, the laboratory did not add any adhesive or place anything on the papers. The report suggested alternatives for permanent retention and display, citing methods used by the National Archives and Library of Congress.

MIS was highly satisfied with the report. The FBI laboratory had provided detailed information on the physical material of the documents, their condition, typewriting, and handwriting. While not providing a definitive rendering, the report provided enough information to allow the reader to conclude the documents were authentic in all respects.

Documents' Long Journey Ends at National Archives

On March 18, Eisenhower sent Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson a draft memorandum to the President, transmitting Hitler's marriage certificate, personal will, political testament, and Bormann's letter of transmittal to Admiral Doenitz. Eisenhower wrote that the documents were apparently authentic, as indicated by a very comprehensive laboratory test made by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which he was attaching. "I recommend," Eisenhower wrote, "that you transmit these historic documents to the President, suggesting that they be exhibited in the Library of Congress or in some other appropriate public institution."

The next day, Secretary of War Patterson wrote to President Truman:

> Our Military Intelligence personnel, through information furnished by the British Intelligence Service, recovered Adolf Hitler's personal and political wills, his marriage certificate, and a letter transmitting these documents

to Admiral Doenitz, signed Martin Bormann. The unique character of these papers and their historic significance prompt me to forward them to you as a matter of personal interest. A laboratory test by the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicates that these documents are authentic.

Hitler's final anti-Semitic tirade, his frantic attempt to maintain a semblance of German government, and what amounts to a suicide pact between himself and Eva Braun vividly illustrate the closing hours of the Nazi regime. These are matters of great public interest. Might I suggest that these documents be placed on display in the Library of Congress or other suitable establishment.

In reply, the President thanked him for the Hitler material and indicated that he was pleased to have looked at them before they went to the National Archives, the repository chosen by Truman.

On the morning of March 26, Brig. Gen. Harry H. Vaughn, military aide to the President brought the Hitler documents to Archivist of the United States Solon J. Buck. It was Buck's understanding that the documents were to be added to the holdings of the National Archives, and they were to be available for consultation, exhibition, or publication under the President's direction. After receiving the documents, Buck called in Elizabeth E. Hamer, chief of the Exhibits and Publications Staff, and Thad Page, administrative secretary of the National Archives and Chief of the Legislative Archives Division, and turned the items over to them.

The next day, Hamer took the volume of documents to the Cleaning and Rehabilitation Staff and discussed removing them from the book and their subsequent rehabilitation. The staff removed the documents from the book, and Hamer talked to Page about when they could put the documents on display. At Hamer's request, Page asked the War Department for more information about the creation, discovery, and history of the documents now in their possession.

MIS prepared a response for the National Archives, providing the background information about the seizure of the documents and a copy of the FBI's laboratory report. "This information," the National Archives noted in reply, "will be very helpful to us in preparing an exhibit of these documents."

The Hitler documents went on exhibit at the National Archives on April 26, 1946, less than a year after the documents had been created in the bunker in Berlin. P



Author

Greg Bradsher's previous contributions to *Prologue* have included articles on the discovery of Nazi gold in the Merkers Mine (Spring 1999); the story of Fritz Kolbe, 1900–1943 (Spring 2002); Japan's secret "Z Plan" in 1944 (Fall 2005); Founding Father Elbridge Gerry (Spring 2006); the third Archivist of the United States, Wayne Grover (Winter 2009); Operation Blissful, a World War II diversionary attack on an island in the Pacific (Fall 2010); the Nuremberg Laws (Winter 2010); the Homestead Act of 1862 (Winter 2012); Monuments Men and Nazi Treasures (Summer 2013); and World War II archivist, Fred W. Shipman (Summer 2014). Dr. Bradsher is a senior archivist at the National Archives.

Note on Sources

The National Archives has custody of scores of documents relating to the creation and disposition of the documents discussed in this article. Among the more useful documents regarding the events in the bunker in April 1945 are the interrogation reports produced by both American military personnel and by British intelligence officer Hugh Trevor-Roper. They can be found in the Personal Name Files, Security Classified Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers, 1939–1976, Records of the Investigative Records Repository, Records of the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Intelligence, Records of the Army Staff, Record Group (RG) 319; the file Major Trevor-Roper Interrogations, Reports Relating to POW Interrogations, 1943–1945, Captured Personnel and Material Branch, Records of the War Department General and Special Staff, RG 165; and Interrogation Summary No.1, "The Last Days in Hitler's Air Raid Shelter," October 8, 1945, File: Interrogation Summary U.S. Forces in Austria, Publications ("P") Files, 1946–1951, Document Library Branch, Administrative Division, Assistant Chief of Staff (G-2), Intelligence, Records of the Army Staff, RG 319.

Quotations by Gertrude Junge regarding the night of April 28–29 are from Traudl Junge, *Until the Final Hour: Hitler's Last Secretary,* edited by Melissa Mueller and translated by Anthea Bell (London: Phoenix, 2004). Also useful are the Interrogations of Hitler Associates, Musmanno Collection, Gumberg Library Digital Collections, Duquesne University, and Trevor-Roper's 1947 book, *The Last Days of Hitler* (London: Macmillan & Co.).

Among the most useful records relating to the discovery and voyages of the Hitler documents from the Berlin bunker to the National Archives are Allied Force Headquarters, Combined Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 60, For week ending February 27, 1946, Part II—General Intelligence, "The Discovery of Hitler's Wills," File: Combined Weekly Intelligence Summary, Allied Force Headquarters, Publications ("P") Files, 1946–1951, Document Library Branch, Administrative Division, Assistant Chief of Staff (G-2), Intelligence, Records of the Army Staff, RG 319; Memorandum from Col. Edward M. Fickett, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Third United States Army to Office of the U.S. Chief of Counsel, International Military Tribunal, Subject: Circumstances of Discovery of Hitler's Wills, January 11, 1946, Hitler's Private Testament and Political Testament, April 29, 1945, File: 3569-PS, United States Evidence Files, 1945–1946, National Archives Collection of World War II War Crimes Records, RG 238; Memorandum, 1st Lt. Allen Fial, 303 CIC Det, Headquarters, Third United States Army to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Third United States Army, Subject: Documents in Luggage of Wilhelm Zander, Alias Friedrich Wilhelm Paustin, December 28, 1945, File: 370.2 1945, Classified Decimal Files Regarding Captured Documents, 1945, Records of Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, United States Army (World War II), RG 498; File: 314.4, Personal Documents of Adolph [*sic*] Hitler, Army-AG Decimal File 1946–1948, Records of the Office of the Adjutant General, RG 407; File: 65-53615, Classification 65, Classified Subject Files, FBI HQ; Investigative Records, Released Under the Nazi & Japanese War Crimes Disclosure Acts, Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, RG 65; and Exhibits and Publications Daily Diary, File: Diary, Fiscal Year 1946, Daily Diary of Activities, 1945–1951, Records of the National Archives and Records Administration, RG 64.